

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

041337Z May 06

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001008

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/01/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [EPET](#) [AF](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SECURITY UPDATE

Classified By: Classified by Amb. John Campbell for reason 1.4 (b)

¶11. (U) Summary: On April 10, 2006, the Ambassador and Regional Security Officer met with heads-of-mission and security officers from the Embassies and High Commissions of: France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Australia, Britain, and Canada. The group discussed the increased security threats in Abuja and the Niger Delta, and Obasanjo's possible third term bid. Highlights of the discussion include an increase in the British security posture in Abuja, organization of MEND and the view of some participants that Obasanjo believes he is Nigeria's "messiah." End Summary.

SECURITY SITUATION IN ABUJA

¶12. (U) The RSO opened the meeting by discussing the recent increase in crime in Abuja. There was a consensus that this was attributable to a shortage of MOPOL (Nigerian Mobilized Police) because they have been redirected to deal with the violence in the Niger Delta and that the police are regularly going for long periods of time without being paid.

¶13. (C) The UK Deputy High Commissioner (UK-DHC) said that the British High Commission (UK-HC) is now providing armed escorts for all travel to and from the airport. He invited other missions to join UK-HC convoys, noting the "safety in numbers." He suggested that the missions consider sharing security. The UK-HC's risk assessment is currently higher than the Embassy's. The German Ambassador said that one of his Embassy's armored vehicles, on the road to Lokojo, about 70 kilometers off the airport junction, was shot at by armed robbers. The shot was directed at the driver's head but was stopped by the bullet proof glass. The driver did not stop the vehicle but continued driving until he reached a safe area.

SECURITY IN THE NIGER DELTA

¶14. (C) When discussing the situation in the Niger Delta, the UK-DHC said that Shell has told the UK-HC that they are expecting things to get worse over the next year with more attacks on expatriates. The UK-HC agrees with Shell's assessment. Shell also told the UK-HC that it was still profitable for them to be in the Niger Delta even with the increase in violence and interference with production.

¶15. (C) The Nigerian fix to the current problem) resulting from an alliance of convenience among the criminals, unemployed youth and local leaders) could calm things temporarily as it has in the past, but the underlying problems would only increase and the next eruption of violence could be even worse. The UKG is working with the Nigerians on local development and would help with security but not until Nigeria can enunciate a sensible approach and commitment to the problems in the Delta) something the entire group agreed did not yet exist.

¶16. (C) The Italian Ambassador reported that an Italian journalist went to the Niger Delta region at the beginning of April and held meetings with all the stakeholders, including the 'guerillas.' The journalist's impression was that the stakeholders were in a state of total confusion. Calls on the key state government officials led the journalist to suspect that there were connections between them and the 'guerilla' groups. In the opinion of the journalist, politics in the Delta are more important than economic problems.

¶17. (C) According to the Italian Ambassador, the journalist further noted that the Ijaw movement, which was once factionalized, is now cohesive and operational under MEND, referring to themselves as 'freedom fighters.' Based on the journalist's interactions with MEND the group was very organized with multiple layers to its leadership structure. Attacks on the Italian company AGIP surprised the Italians because AGIP was actually doing development work with the local people and the attacks hurt the locals as well as AGIP.

¶18. (C) The group agreed that MEND had not enunciated what it wanted. The UK-DHC questioned whether MEND was truly a representative movement.

THIRD TERM

¶ 9. (C) The UK-DHC said that a recent British delegation to the National Assembly found opponents to the third term outspoken while supporters seemed sheepish.

¶ 10. (C) The Japanese Ambassador said that Obasanjo implied to him that the PDP convention would be called as late as late August or early September 2006.

¶ 11. (C) The Italian Ambassador reported that the day before Obasanjo left for the USA (03/28/06) he spoke with the Africa Representative for the Italian Prime Minister. Obasanjo did not say that he was running but everything in his manner suggested that he would be continuing his current activities into a third term, e.g., the programs he was suggesting would be meaningless without him continuing in power.

¶ 12. (C) An aide, 'very close to the President,' told the German Ambassador that Obasanjo believes he is the "messiah" who is meant to lead Nigeria to better shores and fears that without a third term the reform work he has done will disappear. Some of the other participants agreed on this assessment of Obasanjo.

¶ 13. (C) On the question of stability, the UK-DHC and Italian Ambassador both agreed that it was impossible to tell if Obasanjo or someone else would create any more or less stability in Nigeria because currently there is no strong opposition leader to Obasanjo.

¶ 14. (U) Comment: The western diplomats are concerned about the deterioration of security in Abuja, and are unfocused on the likely possibility that Delta instability is the result of more than merely criminal activity. End Comment.
CAMPBELL